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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of an action-centered, experience-based graduate course on homelessness for teachers and administrators, based on the premise that educators must have accurate and sensitive perceptions of homeless students and their families in order not to stereotype such individuals. A collaborative initiative was formed between Richland County School District One (South Carolina), the South Carolina Department of Education, and the University of South Carolina to develop the course. The course was designed to provide accurate information about the causes and nature of homelessness, as well as involve participants in acquiring instructional strategies and classroom responsive approaches that support the successful and positive involvement of homeless students and their families. The course included lectures and demonstrations, guest speakers, class discussion, reading and keeping journals, and student involvement in family homeless shelters. Journal entries from a majority of the 24 participating teachers showed that their views toward homeless children and families had changed as a result of taking the course. Teachers also became more aware of the special needs of homeless students, community resources for the homeless, and the need to take positive action to help such students and their families. (Contains 13 references.) (MDM)

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Teachers Revisit The Meaning of Homelessness

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Teachers Revisit The Meaning Of Homelessness

The need to revisit concepts, events, ideas, and generalizations about many different aspects of life is especially evident in teaching. Our tendency to stereotype others as related to our "last experience" with them can cripple us in current interactions. In less than ten years the context and daily experiences of many of our citizens has changed dramatically. This is especially true of our homeless population. Yet, in many cases teachers and other helping professionals continue to see the dynamics of homelessness as they last experienced it (Quint, 1994). Inaccurate perceptions of homeless students and their families can and does negatively impact students and teachers. *It is this recognition that teachers (and other school staff) must have accurate and sensitive perceptions of homeless students and their families that prompted the development of an experience-based professional development course on homelessness.*

Through a collaborative initiative between the Richland County School District One, the South Carolina Department of Education, and the University of South Carolina, an action-centered graduate course on homelessness was developed. *Three premises shaped this professional development experience:*

1) The experience had to be "hands-on" where teachers were exposed to the changing nature of homelessness and were involved in some active way with the dynamics of this problem - particularly as it effects many of their students.

2) The experience had to introduce teachers to accurate and comprehensive aspects of the issues of homelessness (with particular emphasis on homeless

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students and families.

3) Teachers had to take control of their involvement in the experience through reflective journal writing, through peer sharing activities, and through direct experiences with issues that impact the homeless.

Rationale: The Changed Nature of Homelessness

What do most teachers think about homelessness? Of course there are many different responses to this question. Not surprisingly most of us have held tightly to our traditional conceptions of who is homeless, how they got that way, and how the issue might be resolved (Coontz, 1995). Indeed the twenty-four teacher-participants in the course confirmed this in their post-course self-assessments. Eighteen of the twenty-four participants said their biggest perceptual change was related to their understanding of the new context and meaning of homelessness (Swick, 1995). These teachers are not unique in this regard. Bassuk (1991) reported that a majority of people cling to notions of homelessness that were probably not even accurate in the 1960's or 70's. And, for certain their perceptions were inaccurate for the 90's. Thus, this especially designed course hoped to promote more accurate perceptions in teachers regarding homeless students and their families. *Goals included but were not restricted to the following:*

*Provide accurate information on the ecology in which modern homelessness has evolved.

*Provide accurate information relative to the dynamics of modern homelessness: meaning, causes, severity, impact, and potential solutions.

*Engage participants in experiences (readings, dialogue with agency speakers, homeless project activities, lectures) that broaden their perceptions of homelessness, with particular relevance to homeless students and families.

*Involve participants in peer sharing and interaction relative to the content and process aspects of the course to thus promote reflection and transformation of teachers perceptions of homelessness.

*Involve participants in acquiring instructional strategies and classroom responsive approaches that support the successful and positive involvement of homeless students and their families.

*Familiarize participants with interpersonal strategies for nurturing positive self esteem, self management, and related social skills in homeless students and families.

*Provide participants with an understanding of available school and community resources for use in becoming more effective advocates and liaisons for homeless students and families.

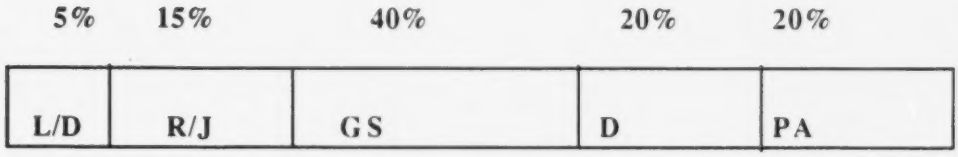
Revisiting Homelessness: Providing A Context For Active Learning And Reflection

Information, direct experience, discussion, reflective journaling, and involvement in application of course experiences with homeless students and families were avenues used to promote a supportive setting for teachers to explore many new dimensions of homelessness. *A nonthreatening environment encouraged each teacher to pursue means that suited their particular personality and needs.* Within the following framework of strategies, individual participants

had options to use in constructing their favored approach to learning.

Lectures/Demonstrations: Basic information, concepts, and practices were introduced through short lecture/demonstration sessions. These sessions were used to highlight course direction, important facts, central concepts, and new practices relevant to teaching homeless students and families. Figure 1 provides a visual picture of the range of time devoted to the use of different instructional strategies in the course.

Figure 1
Percentage of Time per Instructional Strategy



L/D= Lecture/Demonstrations **R/J= Readings/Journaling**

GS= Guest Speakers **D= Discussion**

PA= Project Activity

Readings/Journaling: Knowledge that is used in reflective ways (especially as related to concrete experiences) is effective in broadening one's perspectives. A course journal of "reflections" on assigned readings was used to accomplish two functions: 1) to involve the participants in gaining accurate and current information on homelessness, and 2) to engage them in in reflecting on their perspectives about the various topics covered. Texts and journal articles were chosen to present information relative to the changing nature of modern homelessness and to challenge teacher perceptions of how homeless students and families live. Readings and journals were interrelated with the presentations by

guest speakers and with project activities being carried out by different participants. The work of Bassuk (1991), Bassuk & Lynn (1990), Coontz (1995), Johnson & Kreuger (1989), McCormick & Holden (1992), and Tower & White (1989) proved especially valuable. Participant journals also included teachers' thoughts on class discussions, reactions to presentations by guest speakers, and their reflections on their project involvement.

Guest Speakers: Personal experiences as shared by professional and community leaders involved in daily work with homeless people proved to be one of the most effective means of challenging teachers' perceptions. Presenters included: director of a homeless shelter, coordinator of special residence/support service for homeless abused women, director of a preschool program for homeless children/families, coordinator of the local food bank, liaison for an interfaith church group serving the homeless, coordinator of a transitional housing project, local school district social services coordinator, a case management coordinator, and the state's director of homeless projects.

Guest presenters provided three essential experiences: 1) an accurate and realistic picture of the problem of homelessness in the community; 2) realistic descriptions of specific homeless family situations; and 3) examples of community programs and activities that are effective in helping homeless children and families. Presentations included visual and print material as well lively discussions. *Many of the teacher-participants used these opportunities as launching pads for further involvement in specific agency activities.* Guest speakers also provided a concrete support for ideas presented in the course

readings. Several teachers commented at the end of the course that all teachers should be exposed to this community-based approach as it not only increased their awareness of the needs of special populations but provided specific resources and ideas that can be used to address the needs of homeless students and families.

Class Discussions: Each class session included a time component for the participants to review, reflect, and share ideas and reactions related to the material covered. This often involved participants in reacting to the readings, responding to ideas presented in lectures or by guest speakers, and refining thoughts and feelings toward homeless students and families. Sharing of reactions about course topics and material provide a sounding-board for participants to clarify and refine their thinking. For example, many participants were surprised to find that about one-third of the homeless were families with children. Another surprising fact was the amount of teen homelessness.

Class discussions also helped to shape *proposals for addressing problems faced by homeless students and families.* The opportunity to find out about local resources for the homeless and about what school district resources existed was helpful in this regard. Participant projects emerged from the discussions in ways that would not have happened without opportunities for sharing and reacting to the ideas presented. Perhaps one of the most positive outcomes was the initiation of school-based coordination of services for homeless students by two teachers in the class. Another functional outcome was the development of a community resource guide for teachers and others to use in helping homeless students and families.

The entire focus of the instructional environment was on the active involvement of the participants in exploring the multiple dimensions of homelessness. Topical areas addressed in this professional development course provided the guiding force for this learning approach.

Multiple Dimensions of Homelessness: Content for Reflection and Action

Beginning with the meaning of homelessness and extending to its various dimensions within the realities of community life, the course addressed many stereotypes and issues. Information was gleaned from text and journal readings as noted in the references. In addition, the human stories shared by guests and class members provided a rich source of data. In all cases, the following topics and information were used as "content for reflection and action" as well as for stimulating class discussion.

*Homelessness in the 1990's: Emerging Trends and Issues

*A Composite Picture of Homelessness in the U.S.

*Attributes of Homeless People in the U.S.

*Root Causes of Contemporary Homelessness

*The Cyclical Nature of Homelessness

*Mothers of Homeless Families

*Characteristics of Homeless Children

*The Context of Homeless Children

*Teen Homelessness: A Continuing Journey of Intergenerational Dysfunction

*Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth

*Homeless Students and School Achievement

*Strategies for Humanizing School and Agency Relations with Homeless Children and Families

Key questions emerged in class discussions and provided thematic areas that dominated much of the course:

*What are the various meanings (legal, ethical, human) of homelessness?

*Why has the homeless population changed so much since 1980?

*Why are young families and teens the most rapidly growing segments of the homeless population?

*What are the main causes of homelessness for families?

*How can we address these causes in the short term, long term?

*What is currently being done to help homeless students and families?

*What are the most effective means of addressing the new homelessness?

*What can we do as teachers to be more effective in working with homeless students and families?

*How can we better organize school and community resources to better support homeless people, especially children and families?

Getting Involved Through Projects: Hands-on Learning About Homelessness

Beyond the classroom walls many of the course participants designed and carried out projects that engaged them in direct and supportive capacities with homeless people. This was not only valuable for them individually in challenging their perceptions of homelessness, but also proved to be a validating source for

our class interactions. A sampling of four of the projects that teachers carried out highlights the value of this hands-on approach to teacher renewal.

Child Care for Children of Abused Mothers: One action-project focused on working with children at the Sister Care Center for abused mothers. It is a temporary housing shelter that includes counseling, peer group networking, relocation support, respite from the stress of abuse, referral to needed agencies, and long term guidance. A part of being at Sister Care involves mothers in peer group and parenting sessions. Child care is an essential part of these sessions so that mothers can devote the time to discussing and dealing with their problems. The teacher in this project became one of the care givers for the child care time. Through this experience she learned first-hand about this facet of homelessness. She met and talked with the mothers, cared for their children, and became a part of their lives. Twice a week for two hours she coordinated the child care and at other times she returned to visit with some of the mothers and assist them with specific services. Two of the children were in her school and thus she became a link for their families to the school.

In sharing her experience in class, this teacher broadened other teachers' perceptions of homelessness and its complexity. To realize that middle class mothers are homeless brought the issue closer to reality for many participants. To gain a sense of what abused mothers go through in trying to reframe their lives was also enlightening. Over half of the class, for example, were unaware of the existence of the Sister Care Center for homeless abused mothers. Very importantly, the experience engaged this teacher more intimately in the lives of

two homeless children who were in the school where she taught. An outcome of the project is her plans for continued community service to this very critical part of the community's support system for homeless.

A Garden for Homeless Children and Families: Another class project was on being involved in the Children's Garden, a child development and learning center for homeless preschool children and their families. Three teachers in the course developed arrangements to work at the center. Their involvement included reading to the children, assisting teachers in making materials, helping out on the playground, serving the children at lunch or snack time, and handling telephone and clerical tasks in the office.

Comments from these teachers in class proved most enlightening. The following comments are paraphrased summaries of points they made in class discussions.

These children have the same needs and are like other children but face serious risks in being homeless, poor, and often neglected because of their transiency.

The Children's Garden offers mothers and fathers a chance to look for employment, go to school, hunt for housing, and to take care of other stressors while their children are in a nurturing and safe environment.

Homeless parents do care about their children and value this chance for their children to gain skills for school and life.

Housing is not the sole answer, many of the families at Children's Garden need education, counseling, support, and housing - and the center is trying to help them achieve these needs.

Advocates for Homeless Students in Each School: Children who are homeless or in highly isolated and non-sustaining environments need teachers who are more than alert to their cognitive functioning (McCormick & Holden, 1992). Several members of the class used the course project assignment to develop various advocacy strategies for supporting homeless children in their schools. For example, one teacher became the liaison for homeless children and families in her school. She visited a nearby shelter and set up a study area, visited with two parents at the shelter, increase faculty awareness of this problem in her school, and met with the school counselor to develop a more formalized approach for next school year. Another teacher did a survey of school staff to see what needs they were aware of regarding homeless children in the school. The survey proved educational as some staff said they never knew that any children in the school were homeless. It also served to heighten awareness in staff about steps they could take to help the children have a better school experience. Another teacher developed a supportive, mentoring relationship with a homeless middle school student. She tutored him, made sure the shelter he was in had a study area, provided him with needed study materials, and checked with him often to see how he and the family was doing.

These individual efforts promoted thinking and actions in the larger group that are stimulating district-wide involvement in better articulating a system for meeting the needs of homeless students and families. The class invited the district's coordinator of special services to a course session for discussion about existing and needed new services for homeless students and families. Other

actions included setting up contact people at different schools for the purpose of meeting the needs of homeless students, development of a resource guide that can be used to locate community services for the homeless, and increasing staff awareness of the issue of homelessness and how it can be addressed in schools.

Tutoring, Helping, and Mentoring: Transforming the Live of Homeless Students: Some teachers in the course elected to do individual projects that were connected in various ways to homeless students and their families. One teacher got involved in the "Food Bank" and helped on weekends with tasks like packaging food, unloading food trucks, managing the food store, and helping out with delivery of food to different shelters. He was instrumental in broadening the class's understanding of this resource and in engaging others in volunteering at the food bank.

Two teachers volunteered as tutors at a local shelter for homeless families. They went twice a week and helped children at the shelter with homework and were active in setting up a study and library room at the shelter. They also involved some other teachers in doing tutoring at school with children who were homeless or near homeless. Their sharing of various experiences in class enlightened others with regards to how well the children were progressing in school with just some basic attention and help. They also shared ideas on how to effectively involve parents in this process too!

Transformed Teachers: Journals Tell The Story

Each participant kept a journal over the fifteen weeks of the course. The journal included reading notes, lecture notes and responses, responses to guest

presentations, and the teacher's thoughts, reactions, and plans related to material and experiences in the course. *Perhaps more than any other facet of the professional development course, the journals show the transformation of teachers in their understanding of homeless students and families.* This transformation process included five thematic areas: perceptions of the meaning of homelessness, understanding of the particular needs of homeless students (and their families), awareness of local community resources that serve the homeless (and the complexity involved in actualizing these services), self-assessment regarding one's attitudes toward homeless people; and an empowerment of one's self in taking actions to support homeless students and families.

CHANGED PERCEPTIONS OF HOMELESSNESS: Journal entries showed that a majority (18 of 24) teachers believed their views of homelessness had change. Entries such as the following were common.

I was astounded to learn that a majority of homeless families have very young children! This is alarming and a real danger to our future. I must admit that I thought most homeless people were single men who just didn't like to work.

I had never thought of the strong influence our underlying economic system has on homelessness. But it makes sense when you think of how rent and housing have gone up in costs but wages have stayed lower. It's amazing that more single parent families are not homeless.

Until tonight, it never hit home that homelessness occurs in middle class families. With sudden unemployment and family stress happening more often, I can now see that my views of homelessness were pretty limited.

After class I began to think about some of my high school girls in class. A number of them do not live at home - where do they live? I plan to take more of an interest in them.

Journal entries were matched by the vigor of class discussions and the seriousness that teachers showed in their project work. Comments before, during, and after class, also confirmed that the participants were broadening and challenging their present perceptions of homelessness.

THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS: While the participants had some insights into the unique needs of homeless students, course experiences stimulated them to think more analytical in this regard. Unique needs like lacking transportation to after school events, not having a consistent place to study, lacking resources, struggling with limited clothing and basic care

resources, and the persistent problem of isolation came to the front of teacher thinking in their journals. Here are a few such entries.

> I never thought of the reality that these children do not have a place to study or lack basic resources to work with. Imagine not being able to do your homework when you really want to. I can see now how some of my students really struggle with this problem.
>
> Motivation to study is certainly hindered when one moves to more than four schools in one year. Not only is the child disrupted constantly but must spend much energy just on survival issues. I'll think twice before responding too quickly to a homeless students failure to do homework.
>
> The day after class last week one of my third graders fell asleep at 9 in the morning. He told me that they moved to grandma's because they could not pay the rent. But grandma has no place for them to sleep. I'm better able now to respond to this kind of situation - this class has helped me broaden my thinking.

Teacher discussions served to broaden participant's understanding of these unique situations and to foster in them more awareness of homeless children's need for support and help.

AWARENESS OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES: Class discussions and visiting speakers highlighted the existing resources in the community that serve homeless students and families. Available school resources were also noted in this regard, with portions of two class sessions devoted to presentations on

school district resources and activities. Journal notes reveal the new level of community resource awareness that many teachers reached.

> It was interesting tonight to hear how different shelters adjust to the needs of homeless families. I had never given thought to needing different arrangements for different families.
>
> The idea of transitional housing, helping the family develop stability and achieve some autonomy - is great! I did not know this service was available in our community.
>
> I knew that Sister Care provided shelter for abused women but was not aware of the many other services they provide like counseling, service referrals, and long term help.
>
> It was good to hear that our district has a liaison person working with the shelters and that steps are being taken to set up study rooms and that computers are being placed in these rooms.
>
> The Children's Garden is great! What a fine way to reach homeless families before their problems become a pattern of living. I was really happy to see that our district was providing the space free of charge.

CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE HOMELESS: Journal entries show that many of the teachers made major attitude changes toward homeless students and their families. Three themes were most prevalent: 1) homeless students and families are or can be capable when supported; 2)

connecting homeless students and families to needed services can change the direction of their life; and 3) homelessness is interrelated with many other social problems and needs to be viewed in a comprehensive manner. Journal entries highlight these themes as follows.

> I gained a new respect tonight for the complexities of being homeless. I can see now that many who are homeless are capable people (or have the desire to be so) and with some help can get things going in the right direction.
>
> Services like Centerplace, Sister Care, Children's Garden, and the tutoring program are powerful ways of helping people help themselves. These programs need our support.
>
> Homelessness is not a black box! This course has shown that many different situations influence people's lives.

Teacher discussions were rich and elaborate when related to their new understanding of homelessness. Changed attitudes were evidenced in comments on the number of people who were homeless due to factors beyond their control, how services for the homeless had reached a limit, and how success stories showed the promise of homeless families being helped.

EMPOWERED TEACHERS TAKE ACTION: The realization of helping others achieve new power in their lives is reinforcing that one's influence can reach beyond the classroom doors. Teachers' journal notes on their involvement in new support activities with homeless students and families is

revealing of this empowerment process.

> I never thought I would learn so much by just helping make food packets at the Food Bank. Realizing these packets were being delivered to shelters that day and that homeless people were right beside me helping out changed my thinking more than anything.
>
> My tutoring of Jan (a third grader) has done more for me than her - I think. Seeing her make such notable improvements in school has renewed my faith in my own abilities as a teacher. I see a new dimension in my self too!
>
> I didn't think I could be of much help in watching the children while the mothers at Sister Care held parent meetings. But I found myself talking with the mothers after the meeting and finding out ways I could help (transportation, support, and just listening).

Empowerment comes in many forms and these teachers learned some new ways to help others and at the same time increase their own human competence.

Lessons Learned About Meaningful Teacher Renewal

In many cases professional development and teacher renewal are isolated from the source: teacher identified needs and strategies. This professional development course strongly points in the direction of teacher involvement in constructing the framework for development and renewal experiences. While external sources of ideas are needed, *teacher engagement in constructing professional development experiences provides the context for articulating useful*

and enriching activities.

Teachers pointed to three elements of this experience that confirm the value of an empowering, transforming approach to professional growth and development: 1) participation in setting individual goals related to furthering their understanding of homeless students and families; 2) involvement in concrete experiences that enriched their conceptual understanding of homelessness; and 3) participation in reflective reading and discussion activities that enabled them to refine and extend their knowledge about homelessness.

Setting Individual Goals: Teacher evaluations of the course on homelessness consistently noted the importance of their involvement in articulating individual goals.

> While we had some common goals as a class, our needs varied by grade level and school context. Being able to set one's priorities enriched my participation and enabled me to contribute more to the total group.
>
> My personal goals for this course were different from other teachers as I had already seen the need for a mentoring program in our middle school. This course was the right place to really get serious on this goal.

Too often, professional renewal courses or workshops "black box" teachers into a system that may or may not meet their needs. As teachers articulate their individual agendas, common needs and goals emerge through class discussion and through cooperative sharing activities. Adult learners begin with their specific

needs and contexts and thus gain clear motivation for engaging with others in sharing their piece of the vision and forming larger common goals.

Concrete Learning Experiences: Learning about homelessness and other contextual issues that influence the lives of students is best pursued through concrete experiences that provide accurate and multi-dimensional perspectives. In reviewing various course experiences, participants noted two particularly helpful learning dimensions: 1) participation in school and community projects with homeless students and families, and 2) interacting with guest speakers from agencies and groups that serve homeless students and families. The importance of current problems facing homeless students and their families became "reality" through these experiences. Class discussions were often dominated by the sharing of these experiences, with teachers enlightening each other and inviting each other to join in activities at shelters, tutoring projects, developing school care kits, and other activities. The value of this experiential approach is highlighted in their course evaluations.

> Working at the shelter in the study room did more to change my views of what homeless students experience than anything else in the course.
>
> Serving as a receptionist at the Children's Garden helped me to realize the need for a total family approach to problems like homelessness.
>
> Guest speakers brought to life the realities of homelessness. I have a different picture now of what the homeless population is really like. No wonder so many children in this situation are passive and confused.

Direct experience in the real life contexts of students brings a dimension of specificity to needs and issues that otherwise remain abstract. This showed in discussion times where teachers who had not yet engaged in real situations asked probing questions like: "You mean they must stay in the shelter room from 7 P.M. to 6 A.M." These discussions also reinforced the value of having teachers bring their individual experiences to the total group for sharing.

Reflection and Revision: Transforming experiences include opportunities for reflection, analysis, and refinement of ideas and perspectives about issues under consideration. Three features of the course proved valuable in this regard: 1) directed readings about specific aspects of homelessness, 2) class sharing of project experiences and ideas about particular aspects of homelessness, and 3) weekly journaling activities.

Article and text material acquired meaning in connection to teacher experiences and sharing with others. Information could be integrated with experiences teachers had and thus validated as important in constructing new views about the needs of homeless families and students. Sharing of experiences teachers encountered in their community projects also added to the reflection, analysis, and revisioning process. Journaling provided the synthesis avenue for completing the transformation of thinking for many participants. Experience without reflection, joint analysis, and refinement does little to promote renewal. Journals need to be directive in the sense that teachers set goals, record the specifics of experiences, relate readings to these experiences, and share their views of change as they take shape in various ways.

Building on the Foundation: Plans for Change

Real teacher renewal is continuous, taking shape in the development and use of new ideas and strategies, and building a new system for thinking about and acting upon changed perspectives. Teachers in the course on homeless students and families were protective of their newly acquired vision of what was needed to better support homeless students. As the course came to a close, teachers requested time to brainstorm "where do we go from here" issues. This eagerness to build on the foundation formed during the semester certainly validates the use of a unified, concrete, and reflective approach to teacher renewal and professional development.

Brainstorming sessions prompted several new directions for connecting what was initiated in the course to future efforts for teachers and the school district.

*Distribution of a resource guide for helping homeless students and families to all teachers in the district through a opening of school staff development program.

*Further development of the district's efforts to establish liaisons in each school to work with homeless shelters.

*Initiation of mentoring and tutoring projects for homeless students in several targeted schools in the district.

*Formalization of awareness information on the problem of homelessness in the community for all teachers.

*Continued development of the district's efforts to place computers and other learning materials in shelters in the community.

*Advocating for increased attention to the total system needs of homeless students and families in the community.

*Individual teacher initiated projects in several community sites such as the Children's Garden, Center Place, The Salvation Army, Sister Care, and the Harvest Hope Food Bank continued and expanded.

*Further development and use of the graduate course on homeless students and families, using participant-teachers as resource and teacher-leaders in the second year cycle.

Collaborative Efforts Can Create Success

The collaborative effort of the school district, State Department of Education, and the university, provided the needed framework for articulating a meaningful and successful professional development course for expanding teacher's understanding and involvement with homeless students and families. Multiple perspectives, participant involvement in goal setting, use of varied and relevant instructional strategies, and opportunities for applying acquired knowledge in community and school settings were the key means for achieving success.

The best use of local and global resources in any teacher renewal and development program can only be realized through collaborative planning among all stake holders. This collaboration process must be continuous, systematic, and connected to issues and needs articulated in the local school-community environment. The blend of people engaged in the planning and implementation of the course on homeless students and families "enlarged" the vision and the

system for creating the needed framework for teacher change. Of particular important were the following:

*Shared planning and discussion among state leaders, school administrators, teachers, and community leaders directly involved in serving homeless students and their families.

*Across grade level teacher participation that nurtured sharing of common and unique concerns related to homeless students, parents, and families.

*District social worker initiated and guided discussions with teachers about existing services and plans for the future.

*School administrators involved in the course and participation in planning tutoring, mentoring, and liaison projects.

*Participation of the state coordinator of educational and support services for homeless students and families.

Shared ownership of professional development activities such as this graduate course can and should be integral parts of Professional Development School models. These models, however, need to be collaboratively owned and nurtured by all teacher education stake holders. What made this experience so meaningful was the active participation of all the players who directly and indirectly influence students and families. "Locally owned" professional development courses and experiences short circuit the real processes of change and renewal. Teachers in this project found the best of local, state, and professional knowledge and experiences the substance they needed and used to bring about transformation and refinement of their views and behaviors.

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